

Congratulations to all of these hard-working, dedicated, intelligent, and patriotic young men and women on their appointments.

NATIONAL FINANCIAL CAPABILITY MONTH

(Mr. SHERMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I join President Obama in recognizing April as National Financial Capability Month and highlight the vital role that the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and State CPA societies play in educating all Americans.

CPAs have been leaders in increasing the financial capacity of Americans by creating and distributing free programs, tools, and resources.

Through the American Institute of CPAs' 360 Degrees of Financial Literacy program, some tens of thousands of CPAs volunteer to educate Americans and to open doors to the middle class.

The AICPA National CPA Financial Literacy Commission leads a nationwide effort to advance financial literacy. This is the tenth year of the Feed the Pig program, the AICPA's public service campaign along with the Ad Council that provides free resources to make smart saving decisions.

Literacy begins with the letters A, B, C. Financial literacy begins with the letters C, P, A.

POVERTY, OPPORTUNITY, AND UPWARD MOBILITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WALKER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HILL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, in today's Special Order, my colleagues and I will focus on the important work being done in all of our communities to expand opportunity, alleviate poverty, and promote upward mobility for all Americans.

I want to personally acknowledge Speaker RYAN for his focus and leadership on this important issue and his efforts to energize local leaders to explore new, effective policies for combating poverty in the United States.

In 2014, we marked 50 years since the Great Society program was commenced

by President Johnson. Over the past 25 years, Congress has taken numerous steps intended to reduce poverty in the United States, but these have not had the long-term effects that many expected.

This is largely because of an undue focus on welfare reform rather than just identifying specifically and focusing on addressing the underlying causes of poverty.

Identifying opportunities for self-improvement, addressing the increased growth in poverty and the pernicious effects across the U.S. are of keen interest to me, particularly given Arkansas' elevated poverty rate of 19.7 percent of our population.

□ 1630

I believe it is crucial to focus our attention on identifying ways to empower individuals to take control of their own livelihoods and futures so that they no longer feel that they must rely on external programs that, at best, only play an ancillary role in improving economic circumstances and, at worst, perpetuate intergenerational cycles of poverty.

In these important discussions surrounding poverty in America, I also believe it is critical that we focus on our rural, as well as urban, populations. In my view, the President's policies and proposals have largely ignored the needs of our rural communities that continue to struggle.

Arkansas has a significant population of rural, low-income families, whose hardships are often overlooked in the bigger picture of poverty reduction. That is because rural poverty occurs in lower population concentrations, and some deem the plight of rural poverty to be less acute than that in urban areas. It is important that both faces of poverty be recognized and that solutions be applicable and readily adaptable to a variety of circumstances and regions.

This past year, all of us in the House were graced with a visit by the Holy Father, Pope Francis. The Holy Father has stated that the principle of subsidiarity affords freedom at every level of society to work and to innovate.

The Pope argued passionately that day that attempts to resolve all problems through uniform regulations or technical interventions can lead to overlooking the complexities of local problems which demand the active participation of all members of the community.

In tackling the social challenges of the globe, the Pope expressed there are no uniform recipes. There is no one path to a solution. Instead, the Pope called on the principles of stewardship, subsidiarity, and collaboration to seek solutions.

Last year I started the Community Empowerment Initiative in my hometown of Little Rock to consider key strategies for tackling poverty reduction in Arkansas' Second Congressional

District. The CEI also seeks to encourage community engagement and help educate communities to value their strength and identify their assets to foster community ownership and encourage individuals to be aware and involved in rejuvenating our communities and lives.

I am grateful for my colleagues who have joined me today to discuss this important topic. I look forward to sharing some of the success stories from my own district and highlighting action that Congress can take to support local initiatives.

I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WALKER). I invite him to come to the podium and talk about his experiences. He is a freshman Member of Congress with me. I have very much enjoyed getting to know Representative WALKER. He brings a unique perspective to this. I welcome my friend from North Carolina.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arkansas for taking the lead on this and talking about some issues that are very important to us. I do agree, since President Johnson's War on Poverty began in 1964, the United States taxpayers have spent over \$22 trillion on anti-poverty programs. Yet, for many places in this country, poverty is worse, hunger is worse. Even in our district in the triad, we have places where there are food deserts and food insecurities.

After 50 years, we have to ask ourselves, have we seen any real progress in our communities. Families have been caught up in this generational cycle of dependence that has depleted the resources in many of our communities.

Somewhere along the way, the Federal Government missed the mark. We have created programs that measure success on how many people we put on Federal programs, not measured by how many people we are able to move off programs for upward mobility.

Last week, former Congressman J. C. Watts and I toured North Carolina's Sixth District, my home district. We saw passionate community members working to combat many aspects of poverty. Some were working with limited Federal Government assistance; some were doing so without any involvement from the Federal Government. These community members have found successful ways to feed the hungry in our food deserts and educate former inmates to become employable, contributing members of our society.

One nonprofit that we toured was the Welfare Reform Liaison Project in Greensboro, North Carolina. They work with a coalition of community partners under Project Re-Entry. Their goal is bringing the inside to the outside by assisting former offenders returning to the community after serving prison sentences.

It is not just about the program. We have to love the least of these—as people of faith, we are called to do so—and understanding that sometimes we must

put the relationship before the policy to achieve maximum success.

Another wonderful nonprofit we toured was Backpack Beginnings, 100 percent volunteer driven and community run. They directly provide food and necessities to children in need to make a positive and lasting impact on their health and their future well-being.

One county has no State or federally funded weekend feeding programs. These people have come behind to offer assistance for schoolchildren, and Backpack Beginnings works to fill that gap, all without the Federal Government's involvement, serving 4,000 children in 38 county schools.

Members of the people's House are committed to finding ideas that work to address the underlying causes of poverty and empower local community. I am proud to be part of that with my dear friend and colleague, the gentleman from Arkansas, FRENCH HILL.

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. WALKER for his contributions. I appreciate his thoughts.

When I think about one of the most challenging things that we face in our country, I think about homelessness. When I first became a Member of Congress, it was one of particular interest to me to learn what was happening in Little Rock about homelessness because Arkansas has the third highest rate for children and families in homelessness, so it was a keen issue.

One place I found that was a major success story in using private money and some public money was an entity called Our House. It was founded back in 1987 to address the gap in services for central Arkansas' working homeless and homeless families. They now have a 7-acre campus in downtown Little Rock, and Our House empowers homeless and near-homeless families and individuals to succeed in the workplace.

Between 110 and 120 men, women, and children call Our House's campus home every night, and it serves about 1,800 people annually, about 75 percent of whom are coming to Our House completely homeless. But the shelter's goal is not just simply to provide a safe place for a few nights. It is to permanently break the cycle of homelessness by equipping the working homeless with the skills to be successful in the workforce.

In her decade of leadership of Our House as executive director, Georgia Mjartan has done a remarkable job overseeing the expansion and growth of the shelter into a one-stop shop to address the root causes of poverty. She has collected the many stories of hope from the people who have been touched by her work.

One that particularly touched me was the story of a young woman who didn't graduate from high school, was unable to pay her rent and support her children on the very little money that she made from working in the fast food industry.

When she got to Our House, she was dejected and without a sense of purpose or hope for the future. Within a few months, she was receiving training that she needed to earn her GED, and she was securing a job that paid a living wage.

Two years after leaving Our House, she went back to tell Georgia about the turn her life had taken. As the head teacher for a daycare center, she had acquired her own place, continued the saving practices that she had learned at Our House, and was putting money away for her own kids to go to college.

Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of model that we need in this country to make a permanent break for our working poor.

I now yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT). I ask my friend, a distinguished member of the Committee on Small Business, to talk about his views on what we can be doing in this area.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HILL) for his leadership in this very important area.

Mr. Speaker, when families in this country struggle, it is appropriate that we take reasonable steps to help them through a rough patch. We have several programs designed to do just that, like the Food Stamp program. It is also known now as the SNAP program, or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which provides a short-term safety net for those who have fallen on hard times.

However, the Food Stamp program, like most welfare programs, was never intended to become a way of life for its recipients. Unfortunately, that is exactly what has happened. That is what has happened to far too many people in this country. It is supposed to be temporary help to the truly needy. Unfortunately, to many, it has become a permanent way of life.

To address this growing problem, we need to take steps to help people get off public assistance and back on their own feet. One way to do this is to enact strong work and job training requirements for those able to work.

That is why I introduced legislation, H.R. 4849, a couple weeks ago to restore and strengthen work requirements for able-bodied adults enrolled in the Food Stamp program, or SNAP program. Under this legislation, in order to continue to receive benefits, those recipients able to work must either find employment—which is what we would certainly prefer—or participate in a job training program in order to enable them to get work or to volunteer for the community in some eligible capacity.

So real help to other people in need in the community. That seems very reasonable that somebody who is receiving benefits, tax dollars, would actually give something back to the community or be on the path to better themselves so that they can get off the

need to rely on their fellow citizens and on their own two feet, as we said before.

The legislation also addresses waste and abuse in the Food Stamp—or SNAP—program by expunging unused benefits after a 90-day period. The intent of the Food Stamp program is to assist those families in need on an as-needed basis. If a recipient hasn't utilized all their benefits after 90 days, which is a reasonable period of time, I think, then the recipient has not really demonstrated the need for those funds. So let's use those unused funds to help some other truly needy people or let's give that money back to the taxpayers, where it came from in the first place.

Ohio did a study and they found that in 25 people, there was \$300,000 sitting in the SNAP account that they hadn't used, just building up. Unfortunately, that is oftentimes funds that are going to end up in either fraud or are going to be used for other purposes that was never intended for food stamps.

Food stamps are supposed to help people, the truly needy, not be there to end up being used for gambling purposes, buying lottery tickets, or to buy drugs or alcohol or anything like that. So this takes some of the abuses, I think, out of the system.

Mr. Speaker, these are commonsense reforms that will help make sure that food stamps go to those who actually need them while at the same time protecting our tax dollars from those who would take advantage of the system.

I want to thank, again, the gentleman from Arkansas, FRENCH HILL, for his leadership on this issue. This is a very important issue. There is a lot of money, unfortunately, that gets wasted in a lot of these programs. Let's make sure that the safety net is really helping people and not being abused. I thank him for his leadership on this issue.

Mr. HILL. I thank my distinguished friend from Ohio.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DOLD). A distinguished member of the Committee on Ways and Means and a former member of the Committee on Financial Services, Mr. DOLD has been quite keen on ways to improve opportunities for people throughout the metropolitan Chicago area. I welcome the gentleman and look forward to his remarks.

Mr. DOLD. Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to thank my good friend from Arkansas for leading this Special Order on a topic that, frankly, is extremely important. It is a nonpartisan issue from my perspective because really what we are talking about is how do we enable some of the neediest folks among us in our communities all across our country to be able to provide for themselves. I think, obviously, one of those key ingredients is about getting a good job.

Ultimately, as we look over the past period of time, since the War on Poverty began, our country has spent over \$20 trillion—over \$20 trillion—to move

the needle from about 15 percent in poverty to what it is today at about 14.6 percent in poverty. I submit to you that that is criminal, that so many today, after spending so many resources, are still in poverty.

Whether it be housing needs, whether it be nutrition needs, ultimately what this really boils down to, I would argue, is that we need to be focusing on how do we get evidence-based reforms. How do we focus on outcomes? How do we know that the assistance that is out there—because there isn't a community member out there who doesn't want to help a neighbor.

I would submit to you, the stories that I see when I go up into north Chicago, into Waukegan, into Des Plaines and into Round Lake, these are areas around my district where, honestly, we have people who are struggling to make ends meet, those who require assistance.

Frankly, we need to be able to have a springboard and, frankly, we need to think outside of the box about programs that are enabling individuals to be able to have better outcomes so that we don't have a cycle of poverty, but yet we are able to break that cycle and actually talk about TANF reforms, talk about how do we get some education reforms.

□ 1645

Just last week I spent some time over at the Lake County Jail talking to inmates who oftentimes come out of prison with little hope of being able to find a job. And we know the statistics right off the bat. If they don't find a job within 6 months, they have a 66 percent chance of going right back into prison. That doesn't help them, that doesn't help our community. That is at a huge cost. We need to focus on our outcomes.

So one of the things that certainly I think that we ought to be looking at, one of the things that the Committee on Ways and Means has been looking at, and a piece of legislation that I have offered, is talking about how we get people into a job, accelerating individuals, accelerating those hard-working Americans that want to be able to stand on their own two feet in a job.

And this would be a pilot program. Because the one thing that we do know, Mr. HILL, is that a one-size-fits-all mentality is not going to work. We know a one-size-fits-all mentality doesn't work with education, a one-size-fits-all mentality doesn't work with pick your program.

We need to allow innovators in our country that know what works well in Arkansas, what works well in New York. We are going to hear from our good friend, Mr. REED, if he ever decides to get up and get to a microphone. We are going to hear from all those folks that, again, a one-size-fits-all mentality does not work.

This would be a pilot program that would enable these institutions, that

would enable different States to run a pilot program to enable employers to be able to pick up, let's say, half the cost of a person's salary for the first 12 months. So the government would pick up half, the employer would pick up half. The idea there is that we would be able to offset some of that on-the-job training that is so very, very critical.

The other thing that I think we ought to be looking at is social impact partnerships, another interesting idea. Representative TODD YOUNG, also a member of the Committee on Ways and Means, introduced a bill that I am a co-sponsor of. It is a bipartisan piece of legislation that will allow private investment in local communities for new public-private partnerships.

I think this is enormously important. If the programs are successful, then the government will have reimbursed the investors, which is a practical way of doing it. We are going to reward success, and it will breed more success.

The unemployment rate today, if we were to go and pick up the paper, will say it is around 5 percent. And yet I know if you go into Waukegan, Illinois, today, for African American males, the unemployment rate is 43 percent. That is criminal. Frankly, we can and must do better. So it is about coming up with ideas about rewarding outcomes, about focusing on job training, about focusing on education.

At the Lake County Jail last week, I went in and they were actually doing GED classes. I am thrilled that we are actually trying to empower people with education and some of the skills necessary to empower them when they get out, but we have so much more work to do, so much more work to be able to allow them to be able to have a chance at getting that job to be able to provide food for their families, be able to put a roof over their head.

The Lake County Housing Authority, run by David Northern, again, is an organization that is working hard and is actually doing some innovative things. They are actually putting people into work, giving them a roof over their head, and actually having some forced savings. They are putting them through a program so that when they graduate from this program, they actually are graduating not only with a good job, they are graduating with a roof over their head. They are also graduating with the savings account full of about anywhere between \$4,000, \$6,000, and \$8,000—savings that they didn't know that they could have, putting them on a completely different path.

This weekend I was at the Eddie Washington Center up in Waukegan. They just had their graduation. These are grown men that have hit rock bottom. They have gone in for help. And the Eddie Washington Center is an agency that will provide a roof over their head for these men. They will get them jobs and tasks to do in order to help run the facility. They will get them put into a job, and then they

work through this process. It is a program that lasts anywhere between 6 and 9 months. But at the end of that 6 to 9 months, they have a graduation.

Again, these are individuals that have a job. They have built up that ability, that discipline. They have got a roof over their head, they have had a change in their life, and they have been put on a different path. They, too, also are required to save and have a bank account.

It is about trying to do things differently. Again, I think that is what we are trying to do. We are trying to do things differently and have an outcome, because the one thing that we know is that poverty doesn't discriminate, in the sense that it can be in Arkansas, Illinois, New York, and Nevada. It can be all over the place. Frankly, we need to find a way that we minimize the amount of poverty in our Nation.

So I am delighted to be here today. And I want to thank my good friend from Arkansas for not only organizing this time here on the floor, but for shining a light on things that, frankly, we have so much more work to do on. So much more work to do. Frankly, we need to make sure that they know that we want better outcomes. We want better outcomes for these individuals that are struggling day in and day out.

So, again, I am honored to be up here again today. I want to thank my good friend for yielding to me. I look forward to working with you and, frankly, all the Members of this body because in the 114th Congress, we need to make it our mission to end poverty as we know it. I look forward to working with you all.

Mr. HILL. I thank the gentleman from Illinois. I appreciate his passion for this issue and his hands-on approach about finding things in his community and district that work. I believe that we all can share that information and learn from each other, which is a key purpose for this hour.

Mr. Speaker, last week, Representative TIPTON and I were up in Manhattan. We went to The Doe Fund. What an impressive operation that is. I came away so renewed in faith. What is going on there in New York, where they face an enormous avalanche of challenges, is so well tackled by the men and women of The Doe Fund. I look forward to talking about that, but it is a nice segue for me to yield to the gentleman from western New York, (Mr. REED), my good friend and a distinguished member of the Committee on Ways and Means, for his views on how we can tackle poverty.

Mr. REED. I thank the gentleman from Arkansas for yielding and for taking the leadership in putting this Special Order together to discuss poverty in America.

Before I get into some of the substance, I want to talk about this from a personal perspective. I have 11 older brothers and sisters. My father passed when I was 2. I was raised by a single

mom. It was tough. But she always taught me the lessons of life that have carried me through, and that is to have a good attitude, a positive, optimistic attitude, a commitment to hard work, a commitment to discipline, and a commitment to respect our fellow man.

So I come here to this floor this evening as a Republican to say to all of America: We care. We care about our fellow American citizens that are stuck in poverty for generations.

As my colleague from Illinois had indicated, we have spent over \$20 trillion out of the Federal coffers of hard-working American taxpayer dollars on the war on poverty. And the harsh reality is that war has been lost.

The policies and the visions of old must change. We must attack this issue in a new model by, first, demonstrating to our fellow citizens that we do care, that we are not here to penalize, to judge, but what we are here to do is offer a new vision.

I know my colleagues on the other side of the aisle often chastise us Republicans as people who want to take things away and that we don't really care about those people that are suffering in America. That frustrates me, that angers me, because we do care.

And what we are saying to those fellow American citizens is that we are offering a new way of dealing with this issue. We want to empower you. We want to provide an opportunity for you and your family to flourish.

How do we do that?

How we do that is what we are talking about here tonight, as my good friend from Arkansas has opened his remarks with. We empower people to have an opportunity to have the tools that really will combat and cure poverty in America, and that is a good-paying job, a good education.

Before my father passed, my mom and dad had a promise to each other. They recognized and they talked to me and now I am passing it on to my kids in my household that education is key to the success that you will experience in life in America.

So what we need to do is make sure that education is provided to this generation in a way that empowers them with the tools to pull themselves out of poverty. We also have to recognize that the work ethic in America is what makes us strong, that provide these opportunities, and that we should not have policies out of Washington, D.C., on this war on poverty that have penalized work as people try to rebuild themselves and pull themselves out of poverty.

We should have a reform of what they call the welfare cliff. What that essentially is, if you are going back to work, you are essentially penalized because your benefits are pulled away from you.

What we need is a commonsense system that says: We are going to stand with you. Life is going to throw you curve balls. We will give you a helping

hand and stand with you so long as we stand together and you move yourself and stand on your own two feet as you go forward.

That is what this welfare cliff reform is all about. It is about making sure that the programs have resources that encourage and promote education and technical training and skills that people can then put to their own uses so that they can have a job for themselves and their family.

I will end with this. We have a system, too, that essentially says: In this war on poverty, we are going to gauge success by how much money you spend on this program. We are going to gauge success by how many people come to the government office and see you on a day-to-day basis.

What we need is a system that changes that whole metric and that essentially says to the system: You know what we are going to gauge success on? How many people you move out of poverty and into that position where they stand on their own two feet. It is not just the money that is spent, but the lives that you fundamentally have changed because you stood with them through that difficult time.

So as we go forward, I applaud my colleague from Arkansas. I applaud my colleagues that have come here tonight to demonstrate that, as Republicans on this side of the aisle, we are not going to continue the status quo of decades of failure on the war on poverty.

We need to do better. We have an obligation. I will roll up my sleeves with any colleague on the other side of the aisle and say: This is the time we come together. Because it is not a Democrat or Republican issue. That is an American issue. And enough is enough.

Mr. HILL. I thank the gentleman from New York. I appreciate his comments and I appreciate his personal testimony today about the importance of this issue. It is a bipartisan issue. It requires all of us working together.

The concept behind our discussion is new ideas, new directions, because what we have done for the last 50 years is not working. And somebody who has been a leader on the Committee on Financial Services for seeking out the best ideas, particularly in how we can tackle a housing solution for so many people in need of quality housing, is the distinguished gentleman from Missouri (Mr. LUETKEMEYER), chairman of our Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance.

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. I thank the gentleman from Arkansas. We certainly are appreciative of all the remarks of my colleagues who are here this evening—and Mr. HARDY, who is following—with regard to this important issue and something that the Speaker is focusing on, which is poverty and upward mobility.

Mr. HILL took time out of his schedule last year to invite me to his district. We were able to go down and visit with some of the residents in public housing units, and we had some great conversations with them.

□ 1700

We also met with some community leaders there in Little Rock and discussed the underlying causes of poverty and those charged with identifying opportunities for people in their communities.

I certainly appreciate the gentleman's commitment to this conversation. I know that he is patient about it. He has spent lots of time with it and is again, this evening, spending more time, so I congratulate him on that.

This past fall, I had the honor of joining several of my colleagues in New Orleans, and we were examining the state of housing in New Orleans 10 years after Hurricane Katrina. We wanted to find out what the local housing authority had done right, what they had done wrong, what their problems, what their pitfalls, and what their barriers have been in trying to get things done because, basically, they had to start from scratch.

Everybody saw the devastation of the hurricane, people living in houses that were devastated, if they were still standing at all, and so it was very interesting to visit that. We visited not just the sites, but the residents themselves.

I will never forget the story of one of the ladies who lived in public housing there. She lived there all her life, lived in public housing all her life, and she was raising her children in public housing; but she had a goal that she was going to escape this public housing, and she was going to have her children escape public housing and someday own her own home.

To her credit, that particular day, she was so tickled, I will never forget, the smile was from ear to ear. Her son had just received notification that he was approved for a loan to be able to go buy his first house. He had escaped public housing and had fulfilled her dream for not only herself, but her children as well. It was very encouraging, rewarding, and you could see the pride in her.

I think that is the thing that we need to be looking for for all of the folks who don't want handouts, they want hands up. They want to be able to provide for themselves and lift themselves out of this. All we need to do is enable that to happen.

So we must replicate that story, and I think that we can do that.

I am proud to say that the House Republicans are leading the charge by doing this with this Speaker's Task Force on Poverty, Opportunity, and Upward Mobility, and with the hard work of Mr. HILL this evening putting this together to explain to people our positions, to identify new ways to promote independence and dignity.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance, we are a part of that task force. We are a part of this discussion that we are having, and I am glad to be a part of it as well.

We must develop 21st century solutions for housing assistance with a

higher purpose than simply perpetuating programs that marginalize American families.

Over the past 16 months, as part of my duties as chairman, I have spent time meeting with public housing authorities from not just across my own State, but around the United States as well. One thing is clear: the status quo is not good enough.

In our committee, we have also commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development by holding a series of hearings to examine whether or not HUD has fulfilled its mission of providing housing opportunities for those in need.

Since fiscal year 2002, the Federal Government has given more than \$550 billion to HUD, 60 percent of which, the annual funding goes to the Office of Public and Indian Housing. The Section 8 budget alone increased 71 percent between fiscal years 2002 and 2013.

Unfortunately, for HUD, success isn't measured in the number of Federal programs or in dollars spent. I have had no indication from anyone that the growing need is anywhere close to being met. The reality is that the funding situation isn't getting better, so asking for more Federal dollars isn't the solution. It is time to roll up our sleeves and work together to build a stronger housing safety net.

I am proud to work with my colleague and my friend, Mr. CLEAVER from Missouri—two guys from the “Show-Me” State to show them how to get it done—and we passed H.R. 3700. I am the first to point out this legislation wouldn't necessarily change the world, and it won't end homelessness overnight or meet overwhelming need for affordable housing, but it does reform the outdated and duplicative housing policies and programs that haven't been touched in decades and represents a first step in a long journey to reforming our housing system. The bill passed the House by a vote of 427–0, and I encourage the Senate to pass it without further delay.

Let me close by throwing a few more statistics and a couple of other little thoughts I have here as well out very quickly.

I had the opportunity to visit with some folks from Great Britain; and when we talk about a housing problem or discuss housing in this country, we don't really know the size of the problem because, in Great Britain, they have 17 percent of their people living in public housing, where here it is about 4. The average age of the child living in Great Britain with their parents is 35. Holy Cow. This is not acceptable, but that is where they are with their housing programs in their country.

In our country, 60 percent of the people that live in public housing are seniors and disabled. So a lot of times, let's remember, we are talking about the 40 percent whom we need to find ways to move them out, to empower them, to encourage them to be able to

get out on their own, but the other 60 percent are folks that probably need to be in this particular subsidized situation where they can have an opportunity to live in their own home.

I mentioned a while ago I was in New Orleans, and it was interesting to see that the part that they had rebuilt was interesting from the standpoint that it wasn't just building these tenements where people would be stacked on top of each other, but they were building communities. They would build mixed-use buildings, where you have not just people who would rent and be subsidized, but people who would rent and be able to afford to rent themselves, as well as people who owned the property. These mixed-use properties, by doing this, they were able to actually form communities.

So I think there is a model there for us to look at and to begin to consider how to get these things done.

Another thing, the PHA Administrator came by my office last week. He was in town, and we discussed, again, how to work with this 40 percent to get them to find ways to get out on their own and to enable them. Work requirements are something. He said: Hey, they work.

If you give people the opportunity to work and perhaps transition from what they have, as Mr. REED talked about a while ago, I believe it was, this welfare cliff, if you can find a way to sort of feather that thing so that they can slowly transition off, there are lots of folks who want to be able to move from subsidized apartments to their own home, to owning their own home.

I think, at the end of the day, we in Congress need to find a way to get our economy going because the best way to solve this whole problem is with a job. If people have a job, a good-paying job, they can afford to go out and begin to rent on their own and then, hopefully, be able to, at some point, own on their own.

That should be the dream for everyone, like this lady, a while ago, I was talking about from New Orleans. That was her dream. That is the dream of most people in this country. If that is the case, we need to find a way to do that, and the best way is to improve our economy so they have jobs to be able to pay that.

At the end of the day, I think we need to remember that we want people to have not just a place where they can live, but where they can have a life. I think if that is our goal, we will keep our priorities in perspective, and we will be able to do the job of helping our citizens, our constituents, and the folks of this great country.

Mr. Speaker, I thank, again, the gentleman from Arkansas for his great work on this and having me be a part of it this evening.

Mr. HILL. I thank my colleague from Missouri. I enjoy so much our service together on the Financial Services Committee, and I appreciate his leadership in tackling the puzzle of how to

create a housing mission that helps people that need it the most.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HARDY), my good friend, who is a fellow member of the freshman class in this Congress.

Mr. HARDY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Arkansas for coming and hosting this serious discussion on the serious issues in this country.

According to the Census Bureau, 15 percent of the population is living below the poverty level. For States that were hit hardest in the 2008 economic downturn, like Nevada, the recession is not just a memory for too many, it is still a reality.

At the lowest point, Nevada's unemployment rate was an astronomical 13.7 percent, and the poverty rate was at 16.2 percent. The only thing that is more stark than that number is the fact that, despite the improvement of the national unemployment rate, the national poverty rate has not budged in the last 4 years.

But there is a silver lining here, and it is in the Silver State. Unlike national figures on poverty, Nevada has seen poverty rates drop as the unemployment rate has dropped also.

One of the most effective ways that my State has been able to improve the lives of the most impoverished is through smart community involvement on the local level. Unlike so many Federal approaches that operate on a one-size-fits-all solution, local, community-based solutions are tailored and are specific to community and, in many cases, conditions of each individual's needs.

These approaches work best because they are closest to the situation and usually have the best understanding of the factors on the ground. The impoverished aren't always just a statistic to their community. They are neighbors; they are friends; they are loved ones.

In my community, there is an organization that not only has ideas, but it is actually acting on them and putting them to work in the community to improve the situation. The Hope for Prisoners program, whose mission is to help ex-offenders reintegrate into society and find gainful employment, is a model for success. Jon Ponder, the Hope for Prisoner leader, brings together families, religious leaders, business leaders, and law enforcement to break this vicious cycle that plagues many communities and ours, also.

The various community members act in a selfless service, often using their own time and their own money to make a difference. That is something that we need to get back in this country is that selfless service.

And remember: Who is your neighbor? Folks, where I grew up, everybody was your neighbor, even if you had never met them. We have a responsibility to reach out and give of ourselves.

These are things that Jon Ponder has done. Various community members like Jon Ponder have graduated individuals out of this program. One of

those graduates has started a successful small business, Love's Barbershop. Not only is Love's owner a contributing member of the community, Love's Barbershop lifts the entire community by creating jobs for other Nevada families.

In the case of Hope for Prisoners, the participants join the program on a voluntary basis. If an individual is not ready and willing to break the cycle of incarceration and poverty, no solution will find success.

Investment does not end with those going through the program, however. The success of local, community-based solutions has shown everyone involved to be fully invested. The local businesses employing the participants have bought in completely to working with the program and are willing to give offenders a shot, a shot at working hard, earning a wage, and contributing to society.

Local law enforcement have also been invested. Rather than simply policing the streets as crime stoppers, they are active partners in the community. They work in tandem with the entire community.

The idea of mentoring individuals is such a powerful tool that we all have, and it is available to us. Are you using that tool that is available to you?

Remember: Who is your neighbor? We can make a difference.

Jon and Hope for Prisoners have taken this idea of mentoring and turned it into a job creator and, more importantly, a lifesaver. While Hope has been operating for only 5 years, they have been able to help more than 1,000 people in southern Nevada, with only a 6 percent re-incarceration rate.

Too often, individuals released from incarceration face the uncertainty of a future plagued by limited employment opportunities available to them. Without employment, these individuals become at risk for re-incarceration or poverty and homelessness.

Programs like Hope for Prisoners work. The numbers and the survivors speak for themselves.

While there is still much to do to address poverty in our country, we should all be looking to our States for examples. States are not only the national laboratories of industry, they can also be the laboratories for hope.

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Nevada. I am so inspired by the success that he talks about in Nevada on a local level that is working and how powerful mentoring is.

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I mentioned a few minutes ago that our colleague, Representative TIPTON from Colorado, and I were up in New York last week. We visited The Doe Fund, which just recently celebrated 30 years of fighting homelessness and hopelessness in the boroughs of New York. They provide affordable and supportive housing for individuals and families struggling with chronic homelessness.

They are famous because of their Ready, Willing & Able program, the bright, colorful uniforms all across the boroughs of New York that provides homeless and formerly incarcerated individuals with transitional work, housing, case management, life skills, education assistance, occupational training, job readiness, and graduate services.

About 2,000 individuals per year are helped through The Doe Fund's extensive network of training and jobs. It is exactly the kind of thing, Mr. Speaker, that we want in all of our cities where citizens come together and help the least of these, those coming off parole and those trapped in alcohol or drug abuse.

My hats are off to Harriet McDonald, the executive vice president and co-founder, and her husband of The Doe Fund and all that they are doing good and the success they have by the number of former Doe Fund beneficiaries, like Don Pridgen, who now is a case-worker helping his fellow citizens as an alumnus of The Doe Fund.

Arthur Brooks said recently at the American Enterprise Institute: "The Doe Fund is an extraordinary success not just because of its numbers (it has lower criminal recidivism and higher work attachment than virtually any other program for the homeless in New York City) but because it specializes in taking care of some of the most difficult members of society—the hardest cases."

That is what impressed Representative TIPTON and me on our visit last week. My friend from Nevada was talking about mentoring, and that is so essential, in my view, to the idea of educational attainment because, truly, if the best program to end poverty is a good job, we have got to stop the horrendous dropout rates that we have.

We have to have people that have the kind of mentoring they are not getting, potentially, from their family or in their school system only to be able to stay in school and think ahead about their future, to have aspirations for their future. If we can close that gap of staying in school, we can close that learning gap as well.

Some programs in my district that have impressed me in this regard are, first, Greenbrier High School. Greenbrier High School is a public school in a rural part of my district that is doing both skill workforce training while students are in high school as well as getting them up to 2 years—2 years, Mr. Speaker—of college credit by partnering with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to have a dual enrollment system.

This saves families money and gets people the kind of educational attainment that we want. This is all done in the confines of a successful, locally controlled local public school.

Representative BROOKS of Indiana stopped me this week and said that she couldn't be with us for this important hour of discussion about the ways and

means of beating poverty in our society, and she wanted me to say—and I think it is illustrated by Greenbrier High School, Mr. Speaker—that, if we could lower dropout rates, we, in turn, could change the direction of family success and family income.

My friend from Nevada was talking about mentoring programs, and we have a bright story there in Little Rock with Donald Northcross, founder of the OK Program. OK stands for "our kids."

Donald is a former deputy sheriff in Sacramento, California, who moved to Little Rock, inspired by the work, vision, and leadership of Fitz Hill, president of Arkansas Baptist College in Little Rock.

Donald was troubled by the violence and despair that he found in Black communities in California and the growing incarceration rates of young Black men.

Determined to make a difference, Donald founded the OK Program back in 1990 and is now spreading it across the United States with a goal of using it as a way to mentor young African American males while they are in their middle school years and through high school years to make sure that they are on the right track.

These are just a few examples of what you are hearing around all of our districts whenever I travel in the U.S. about how people are banding together as citizens in our great country to tackle poverty using local resources and local ingenuity.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that we can come back in a few months and talk about this issue again and give more Members an opportunity.

I want to thank those that joined me today on the floor to discuss this important issue about how we alleviate poverty in our States and our local communities and how we overcome barriers of our existing Federal programs or other program barriers that are preventing success. There is no doubt that we have unique, successful opportunities throughout this country to beat this challenge.

I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues in the House and the Speaker's Task Force on Poverty, Opportunity, and Upward Mobility. I thank Speaker RYAN for his personal dedication and leadership to this topic across our country.

I want to thank our team in Arkansas and in Washington, D.C., and my staff for their commitment to this issue and how we are coming together to find solutions in the Second Congressional District to both urban and rural challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

DEMOCRACY SPRING: MONEY IN POLITICS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January